

Views from the Octagon October 2011
by Carol Palfrey

Have you read any good books lately? I don't mean the latest or the winner of the Booker Prize, but a non-fiction title of relevance to religious, spiritual or social issues. Great fiction can, of course, can address all these aspects of life, giving us new perspectives on life and forcing us to empathise (or not!) with a whole range of characters as they deal with the problems, triumphs, joys and disasters which their authors have created for them. But sometimes we need a little more direct stimulation to get us thinking about the "Big Questions" and I hope that this brief article may encourage you to broaden your reading horizons.

Over the past few months, Helaina Checketts and I have been working upstairs in the gallery to create a new Octagon Library based on the existing small collection plus the large quantity of books donated by Joy Croft when she downsized and found that her library would not fit into her new flat.

The more observant of you may have noticed the removal of the glass-fronted bookcase from the back of the Chapel and its replacement by a set of adjustable shelves installed for us by Bill of CGS. This will be the home of our new library which Helaina and I hope will be well used.

In our aim to be professional, we have created a catalogue organised in the simplest possible manner – by title in alphabetical order (ignoring the definite and indefinite article). In addition, each book has been classified into one or more categories according to subject matter: Autobiography and Biography; Children; Poetry/Art/Music (including a few fiction titles); Hymns, Prayers & Meditations; Ministry; Norfolk and Norwich; Other Religions; Philosophy and Theology; Psychology and Psychotherapy; Science; Service Materials; Social Issues; Spiritual Experience; Spiritual Practice and Meditation; Unitarianism. The catalogue will enable readers to identify books by Title, Author or Classification. We are introducing a "loans book" for users to record when they take out and return books and hope this will not be too much of an imposition. It's always good to know where a book is in case another reader is anxious to borrow it. Bearing in mind that it is often very easy for a borrower to forget where they obtained a book, each volume in the Octagon Collection has been emblazoned with a luminous yellow sticker reading **"Property of the Octagon Chapel, Norwich"**.

The Octagon Chapel had a lending library from its earliest days and the re-establishment of a catalogued collection builds on this proud Unitarian commitment to the importance of education. In today's jargon "Life Long Learning".

We will let everyone know when the Library is “Open for Business” and look forward to seeing members of the congregation browsing the shelves.